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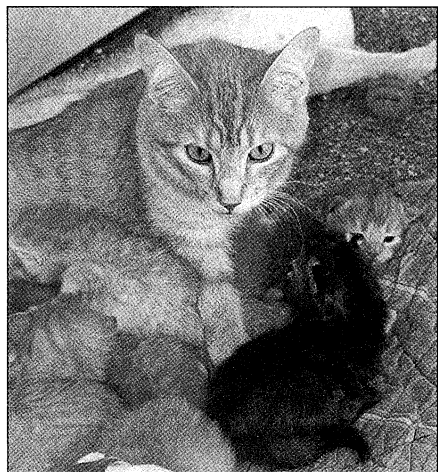
Rhode Island Cat Forum

In our last newsletter, we told you about the Rhode Island Cat Overpopulation Collaborative, an innovative campaign that NERO is involved with to promote responsible pet ownership and to enhance the status of cats. This year's annual spring training conference of the New England Federation of Humane Societies (NEFHS), which took place in Newport, Rhode Island, and featured a day-long program on cat behavior and handling, provided the perfect opportunity for NERO to present an evening forum of its own. This event was designed to address a population of cats that continues to elude simple categorization: namely, the large number of outdoor cats found in almost every community.

NERO assembled six panelists for the forum, entitled Community Cats: Cooperative Approaches to Free-Roaming Felines, to represent a variety of perspectives, from wildlife management and public health to animal care and control. Each panelist presented concerns and challenges regarding the impact of

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Stray cats like this new mother aren't always lucky enough to be rescued by an animal shelter before their kittens are born.

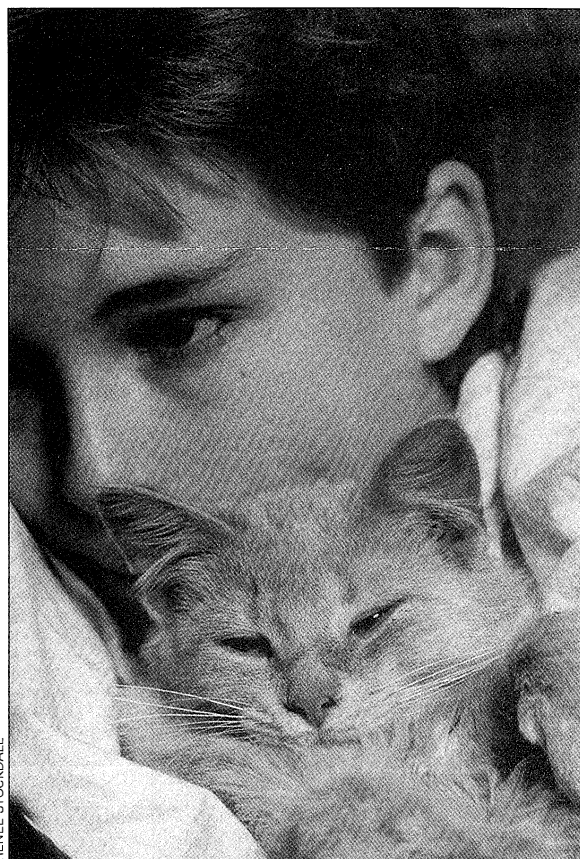


Maine Gets Tough on Animal Abusers

Animal advocates in Maine experienced a very tumultuous legislative season this year, with bills spanning a wide variety of topics from circuses to hunting practices to animal cruelty investigations. Although a number of issues fell by the wayside or were tabled until the Legislature reconvenes in January, local activists and animal protection organizations enjoyed a significant victory with the passage of L.D. 1679, An Act to Increase the Penalties for Animal Cruelty.

NERO and local group Maine Friends of Animals (MFOA) had lobbied for this bill in previous legislative sessions with little success, but this year proved to be different. With a strong bill sponsor, renewed attention to problems with the state's response to animal cruelty complaints (see Spring 2001 NERO Regional News cover article), an expanding field of literature and research on the connection between human violence and animal cruelty, and common sense measures detailed in the legislation, L.D. 1679 received widespread support from Maine's lawmakers and was signed into law by Gov. King on June 13.

The new law, which was drafted by NERO and MFOA, goes into effect on September 21. It expands the definition of animal cruelty, establishes the category of aggravated animal cruelty, raises the fines for both civil and criminal convictions, and increases the penalty from a misdemeanor to a felony for repeat offenders and for all convictions of aggravated animal cruelty.



RENEE STOCKDALE

This legislation also requires that juvenile defendants receive psychological counseling, and it institutes a number of other changes that will improve the effectiveness of current anti-cruelty laws.

"While many cases of cruelty investigated by humane officers involve unintentional neglect that can be resolved through education, this legislation recognizes the importance of clearly distinguishing between neglect and intentional cruelty and abuse, as well as the importance of relevant factors such as previous convictions and the degree of mistreatment to determine the scale of the penalty," said NERO Program Coordinator Hillary Twining, who saw the bill through

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Regional Snapshots



NERO once again assisted with the spring Canada goose egg-oiling project at Lake Sadawga in Whitingham, Vermont, which began several years ago to help reduce the number of unwanted geese born on the lake—and the ensuing conflicts that result. NERO Program Coordinator Linda Huebner is seen here marking an oiled nest.

NERO's Joanne Bourbeau (left) greets Bangor Humane Society Director Bev Uhlenhake at Animal Care Expo. NERO awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to the Maine society to attend Expo. Don't miss Expo 2002, April 3–6, at the Fontainebleau Hilton Resort in Miami Beach, Florida.



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free-roaming cats. These remarks laid the groundwork for a lively and informative discussion with members of the audience, which consisted of close to 50 people from diverse backgrounds—from local residents to shelter employees to feral cat caregivers.

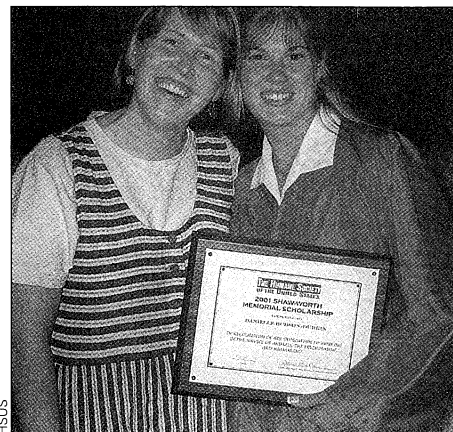
"As a forum for discussion and sharing of ideas among diverse stakeholders, this evening program proved to be a resounding success," said NERO Program Coordinator Hillary Twining. "NERO hopes that this event will serve as a springboard for future collaborations on this and other topics."

Shaw-Worth Winners Announced

The Shaw-Worth Memorial Scholarship awards \$1,000 in tuition assistance each year to a New England high school senior in recognition of significant work in the field of animal protection. NERO gladly administers this scholarship for the Shaw-Worth family. This year's applicants were so strong that two students were chosen to receive scholarship money.

Danielle Hudson-Durkin, a student from Rutland, Vermont, was awarded \$1,000 for her demonstration of great compassion and respect for animals, as well as her active community involvement and leadership in humane education. Danielle created the annual Julie Gilligan Memorial Pet Care and Safety Day in 1997 to memorialize a close friend who was killed in a car accident four years ago, and who shared Danielle's love of animals. This special day provides an opportunity for fourth-graders throughout the Rutland area to learn about responsible pet care and handling for animals ranging from rabbits and hamsters to dogs, cats, and horses. Danielle also volunteers at her local shelter, and enjoys assisting her neighbors with pet sitting and obedience training services. Danielle will be attending Vermont's Johnson State College in the fall and plans to major in environmental science.

Ashley Mason of Salem, New Hampshire, received a \$500 scholarship to recognize her



NERO's Hillary Twining (left) poses with Shaw-Worth Scholarship winner Danielle Hudson-Durkin at her high school graduation.

work in protecting ecosystems and promoting biodiversity. Ashley worked through a self-directed internship to make improvements to her own town's forest and educate the people of Salem about the wildlife and important wetland habitats that exist in their community. She plans to explore majors in environmental science, environmental studies, and wildlife ecology at the University of New Hampshire. If you would like to assist future recipients by contributing to this scholarship fund, donations can be made payable to The HSUS, earmarked for the Shaw-Worth Scholarship, and sent to our office.

continued from "Maine Law," page 1

the legislative process. "This legislation provides prosecutors and judges with needed sentencing guidelines while also maintaining enough flexibility to treat each case individually. Maine legislators and policymakers should be commended for recognizing that animal cruelty must be taken seriously."

The HSUS recently released a yearlong report on animal cruelty in America. Looking at more than 1,600 cases nationwide for the year 2000, The HSUS found that a large number of intentional animal cruelty cases involved some sort of family violence, whether domestic violence, child abuse, or elder abuse. The research also indicated that an extremely high number of intentional cruelty cases were committed by male teens under the age of 18. The report was released in conjunction with The HSUS Animal Cruelty/Human Violence Awareness Week, April 15–21.

The HSUS is thankful for the efforts of Rep. Tom Bull (Freeport), who sponsored this legislation, and for the strong support of the Maine legislators who voted in its favor. Thirty-two states now classify animal cruelty as a felony, including all six New England states.

For more information on "The HSUS First Strike Campaign 2000 Report of Animal Cruelty Cases" or "The HSUS Blueprint for Drafting Amendments to Strengthen State Anti-Cruelty Laws," visit The HSUS Web site at www.hsus.org.

Legislative Update

The year 2001 marked the beginning of some busy legislative sessions for animals in New England. Here are just a few of the bills NERO has been working on. For a full listing of animal bills in New England, check our Web site at <http://regions.hsus.org>.

Connecticut

■ S. 1011 streamlines the administration of the state-subsidized spay/neuter program for municipal animal shelters. The bill was amended to also allow for standardized dog licensing and assistance with feral cat vaccination and spay/neuter efforts. *Status: Signed by Gov. Rowland.*

■ H. 5832, the Rocky Memorial Bill, was proposed in response to the tragic death of a German shepherd who was bludgeoned to death. This bill, supported by NERO, would have allowed people to sue for non-economic damages (emotional suffering) in cases such as this one. *Status: Died in the House.*

Maine

■ L.D. 628, supported by NERO, would ban the use of elephants in displays such as circuses, parades, petting zoos, and traveling exhibitions. *Status: Failed.*

■ L.D. 1435 corrected a longstanding loophole that left shelters without legal ownership of the cats they accept. The new law also creates an incentive for owners to put identification on their cats by mandating a longer holding period for such animals. *Status: Passed.*

■ L.D. 1170 and L.D. 1695, both enacted as emergency legislation, provide the framework for improving the state's Animal Welfare Program, including increased funding, a revamped Animal Welfare Advisory Council and better tracking of cruelty cases. *Status: Passed.*

Massachusetts

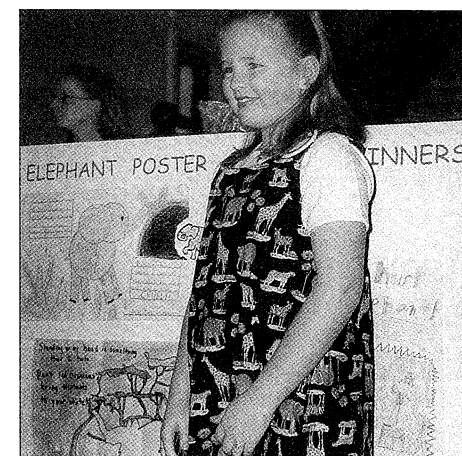
■ H. 4261/S. 2047 includes nearly \$7 million in state subsidies to the greyhound tracks, but it also includes greyhound-friendly amendments that require stronger, publicly available records and the creation of a \$500,000 greyhound adoption trust fund. *Status: Awaiting governor's signature.*

New Hampshire

■ S.B. 416, an Act Requiring a Permit for Ownership of a Pit Bull, Rottweiler, or Doberman, was opposed by NERO due to the inadvisability of breed-specific legislation to address dangerous dog issues. *Status: Failed.*

Rhode Island

■ H. 5853 proposed a ban on the use of carbon monoxide (CO) chambers, while H. 5420 recommended further regulation of the use of this equipment. NERO



Arundel, Maine, third grader Hannah Hunnewell was a winner in the Kids Helping Elephants poster contest, which coincided with the introduction of L.D. 628.

testified in support of both bills but noted that animal sheltering facilities still using CO chambers would need adequate time to switch to euthanasia by injection, which currently must be performed by a licensed veterinarian. *Status: H. 5420 signed by the governor.*

Vermont

■ S. 176 would establish a training and certification curriculum for humane officers, create a position for a state animal welfare director, and add civil enforcement measures to the existing animal cruelty laws. The Senate Agriculture Committee has commissioned the state's animal cruelty task force (of which NERO is a member) to continue its work on this legislation.

Reflect for a moment...

How can I help animals and receive income and tax savings at the same time?

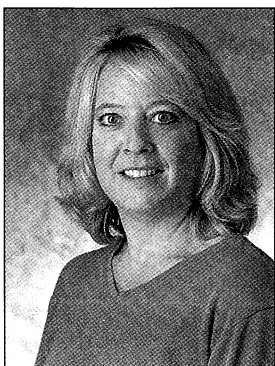


By making a planned giving gift to The Humane Society of the United States, you can assure that animals will receive the protection they need while providing significant tax savings and income to yourself. Naming The HSUS as a beneficiary of your estate or trust demonstrates your lasting commitment to animal welfare and strengthens the society for future tasks. We will be happy to send our latest information on planned giving and our programs to help animals.

Mail this coupon in the envelope enclosed or send it directly to The Humane Society of the United States, NERO, P.O. Box 619, Jacksonville, VT 05342-0619.

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Director's Report



By Joanne Bourbeau
*Director of the New England
Regional Office*

A Future for Animals Is in Their Hands

Children are our future. Everyone has heard this popular phrase, used to express the importance of "the next generation" to not only each child's own family, but also to society as a whole. It is through children's education and experiences that a framework is built for values and beliefs, interests and knowledge, and ultimately, a moral code.

Through my work in animal protection, I have seen many examples of the powerful relationship between children and animals. Children and animals just seem to naturally "go" together. Whether it's the special bond a child has with his or her own pet, or a natural fascination with the animal kingdom in general, I'm sure we could all relate stories of kids who have displayed their concern for and love of animals through a good deed.

Our office has been fortunate to cross paths with several kids who have used their resolve and genuine compassion for animals to make a difference. This year's Shaw-Worth Memorial Scholarship winners, Danielle Hudson-Durkin and

Ashley Mason, are perfect examples. And there have been many others.

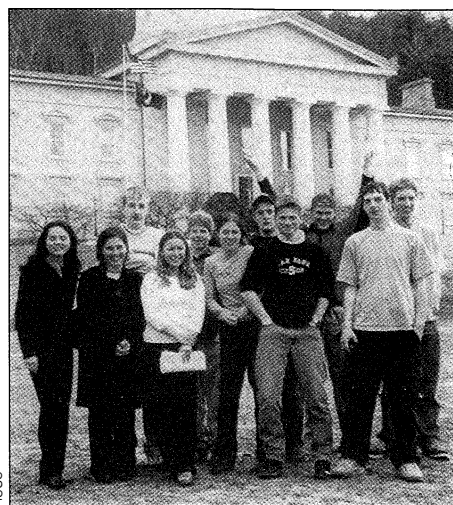
When Lauren Skaskiw's science teacher threatened her with a failing grade for refusing to dissect an animal, she didn't acquiesce. Instead, she enlisted the help of her mother, who heads a humane society in Vermont, and several interested students, teachers, and community members, to initiate state legislation that would give all Vermont students the right to choose a humane alternative to dissection.

It was truly heartening to see Lauren and her classmates attend and speak at the hearing on S.B. 142. Lawmakers listened attentively as each student testified, some reading letters from their fellow students who were unable to be there. Among the feelings students said they had during their dissection experiences were repulsion, discomfort, anger, and sickness. One student said it "seemed wrong and immoral," another wished she hadn't participated, and yet another said it was an unnecessary waste of life. Students also spoke about the viable, less expensive alternatives available to them—including computer simulations, three-dimensional models, interactive videos, and illustrated manuals and films.

Lauren was eventually allowed to do an alternative assignment using a CD-ROM simulation. She received the highest grade in the class. And Lauren says she doesn't have the smell of formaldehyde to remind her of her experience.

In the meantime, she maintains her fight to make it easier for students who come after her to make the choice that's right for them and the animals they care about—without the threat of a failing grade. If you are a Vermonter, you can help Lauren by calling your state legislators and asking them to support the bill.

I thank Danielle, Ashley, and Lauren for



Lauren Skaskiw (front row, third from left) and her classmates from Woodstock Union High School pose in front of the Vermont State House after the hearing on the dissection bill.

helping to reinforce my belief in the importance of the next generation. By nurturing and supporting their compassion for animals, we can do our part to make sure that our future is one that includes animals, in a society that values everyone's contributions.

Save This Date!

When: May 29–June 1, 2002

Where: Radisson Plaza Hotel, Fort Worth, Texas

Why: The HSUS National Conference on Animals in Disasters. You'll meet hundreds of people involved with caring for animals in disasters. And you'll gain valuable information, hands-on training, and much more. For more information, call 301-258-3063.

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Promoting the protection of all animals